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## THE GERMAN NOVEL.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note how in every one of the great languages of Europe the novel is coming to take the foremost place in imaginative literature. This is as true of France and England as of Germany. If we ask ourselves who were the representative writers of Elizabeth's day, or of Anne's, or of the Georges', the larger part of the names that rise to our minds will be poets. In our own day the men of corresponding position are the novelists. Even Tennyson and the Brownings, Longfellow and Lowell, as a poet, seem to belong to a receding generation. And so in France the men who made famous the age of Louis XIV. were the poets, while to-day prose is the favorite vehicle of literary expression. In Germany, Heine is the last of the great poets, and the novelists have come to claim almost the entire field of imaginative literature. By their number more perhaps than by their merit, they tend to drown all other voices. The annual production of novels in Germany appears from Kürschner's *Literaturlexikon* to be about 1,200, and to them we may probably add at least 6,000 short stories. Of these by far the greater part are of course wholly ephemeral. It is to the few writers whose work marks progress, development, or at least change, in the art and aim of fiction that I wish to direct attention here.

And first a glance at the past. Wolff's *Simplicissimus* may mark for us the beginning of German fiction. This wonderfully realistic tale of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648), in which the author himself bore a part, suggests the somewhat earlier *novela picaresca* of the Spaniards, and struck so popular a chord that it evoked a crowd of imitators who out-

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<sup>1</sup> Rehorn: *Der Deutsche Roman*, 1890; Schönbach: *Ueber Lesen und Bildung*; Bleibtreu: *Die Revolution in der Literatur*, 1886; *Kampf ums der Dasein Literatur*, 1887.

bade one another in tales of wild and warlike adventure. By the side of this there soon appears a second current, the tales of travel and shipwreck, with their source in the English Robinson Crusoe, showing usually a strong but untrained imagination and very little artistic finish. Here rivalry led naturally to a riotous excess which furnishes the excuse and the point of the satires of Münchhausen and Schelmuffsky, the comic liars of German literature. The imitations of Robinson Crusoe are hardly to be counted. There is a whole literature of *Robinsonaden*, the Italian Robinson, the Dutch, French, Saxon, Silesian, and Swiss Family Robinson. Then there is the *Insel Felsenburg*, perhaps the best in this kind, a tale of an earthly paradise, with its Adam and Eve and the kingdom they founded, all quite in the style, and at the last clearly under the influence, of Rousseau's theories of nature and society.

But neither these, nor the "Volksbücher," are the ancestors of our modern fiction, whose sources we need not trace beyond Wieland and the literary circle at Weimar. For this stands in essential relation to the French Revolution, the source of the social problems of our day. First with Wieland, the novelist becomes a social philosopher, who seeks the key to living vital questions. He is, to be sure, a laughing philosopher, an Epicurean *pocourante*, but yet he brings imaginative literature back to the psychological and philosophical basis that had made the glory of Wolfram von Eschenbach.

Goethe accepted his standpoint and bettered his instruction. By his analysis of character he opened a boundless field to the novelists of the future. Keen insight and fearless opposition to prejudices, moral or social, in "Werther" and "Wilhelm Meister," the remarkable perfection of form in the "Elective Affinities," had an influence on fiction that can be traced for at least two generations. In its social philosophy, however, this period was more swayed by Jean Paul and the Romantic School whose work one of themselves describes as "sentimental material in fantastic form." But

while the fantastic unreality of Jean Paul might be admired, it could hardly be successfully imitated, and so it remained without great direct influence on fiction. Not so the eccentric talent of Friedrich Schlegel, one of the first and most zealous preachers of the "emancipation" of women and of general lawlessness, especially in his autobiographical novel "Lucinde," whose heroine Dorothea Veit had been divorced that she might share the home of this talented author who assures a friend that "she has no sense for anything in or out of the world but love, music, wit, and philosophy." The climax is suggestive. In Schlegel's "Lucinde" we have the troubled source of the turbid stream of novels that preach woman's rights and social reform generally. Intrinsically the "Lucinde" is not worth study or even mention. It is planless, and, in spite of its shameless autobiography, dull. Other romanticists were at the time more popular.

Novalis has given us in "Heinrich von Ofterdingen" and his Blue Flower a romantic Wilhelm Meister, whose serenity is exchanged for dreamy enthusiasm, where we seem to move in a mild fairy land amid misty myths that lift at times to give us brief glimpses of reality only to close suddenly again upon us. Novalis always means to be clear, but the eloquent and poetic fecundity of this pupil of Goethe is ever again tempting him to leave the earth and soar.

Yet neither Novalis, Tieck in his first period, Fouqué, Arnim, nor his wife Bettina, were at all in touch with national life, though in their day they were more read than Schlegel, and Fouqué's "Undine" is still popular. They had followers, too—Clauren, whose sickly sentimentality Heine has made a byword, and Hauff whose "Lichtenstein" is still read with pleasure as an historical romance. But their influence did not outlast the great change that came over the German spirit in the next generation.

That generation was to be occupied as none had ever been in Germany with political life. The years between the French Revolutions of 1830 and 1848 form a period of

intense fermentation throughout Germany. This was no time for the pretty fancies of the romanticists, for Blue Flowers and Water Fairies. It was a time of serious problems, the critical point of the struggle between the old feudal constitution of German society and the new democracy, between aristocracy and industrialism, the age of popular journalism in Germany, of the railway and the steamboat. The year 1848 marks the dividing line between the old literature and the new. Of the earlier novels whose influence can be traced after 1850, there remain only Goethe's "Elective Affinities" and Schlegel's "Lucinde."

"Young Germany" was full of energy and zeal, they were reformers, revolutionists rather, bent on destroying all barriers to social freedom, or as it has been epigrammatically called, "the emancipation of the flesh." At their head was Gutzkow, and one of his first stories bore the significant title, "Wally, the Female Skeptic." It earned its author fame and what was then the added honor of three months' imprisonment, and it had many fellows in its attack on the existing social order, not often wise but voicing very clearly the impending revolution. Among these "The Pupil of Nature" and "The Pupil of Society" two youthful works of Luise Mühlbach deserve special mention. Germany was now in closest touch with France. Sand, Sue, and Dumas, with Rousseau behind, were studying modern life with the same sympathy for the lowest social orders, and found in severity to aristocracy a key to popular favor. The novel came to have the actuality and living interest of a political pamphlet. It became and has continued one of the most effective forms of social and political propaganda in Germany, taking for this purpose its subjects from very recent history. The true historical novel developed somewhat later among them, as "Young Germany" grew older and cooler. Laube's *Der Deutsche Krieg*, a story of the Thirty Years War, the best in this kind that "Young Germany" produced, was not written till 1863-1865.

The gospel of emancipation, first preached in "Lucinde"

and ably seconded by Johanna Schopenhauer, mother of the philosopher, had its natural result in the multiplying of female novelists, a characteristic sign of this time. Beside Mühlbach and the sane and moderate Lewald appear the radical Luise Ashton, the mildly polygamous Ida Frick, and Ida Hahn-Hahn, whose theory seems to be that a woman whose heart is large enough for two ought not to be content with one. Even the mild and gentle Marlitt does not always hide her emancipationist birthmark.

Marriage is of course the subject dear to these feminine hearts. Lewald has turned it in every direction and looked at it from every side. After forty-five years she decided that practice was better than speculation. She married Professor Stahr (1885) and the subject lost its interest for her. Other women, too, grow far less radical in this matter, and Wilhelmine von Hillern has actually satirized blue-stockings and all their ways in *Der Arzt der Seele* (1870).

In style the novels of "Young Germany" show growing delicacy in detail-painting and increasing clearness in form and language, which may be ascribed to the stimulus and example of Goethe's "Elective Affinities." In their general tendency an independent nationalism asserts itself with growing confidence, a confidence that is never lost, even in the dreary reaction that followed the premature outburst of 1848.

This reaction, however, turned fiction for a time from the political to the purely literary field. Ceasing preface to preach, it strove to entertain, and even aspired to cultivate. These are the palmy days of *Die Gartenlaube* and other unpolitical and generally "harmless" journals. But the novelists are still almost wholly from the liberal school in politics and strongly influenced by the scientific development of the age and the theory of evolution. Under this guise the novel becomes more respectable, more fit for the parlor table, and finds a widening circle of readers. We are brought thus to our own time. And here it is convenient to distinguish historical fiction from novels that deal

with contemporary life, which themselves invite subdivision, as will appear presently.

The modern historical school of fiction begins with Karl Spindler and Willibald Alexis who used history in a time of national humiliation to strengthen and deepen the patriotic spirit.<sup>1</sup> Equally national and more artistic is Scheffel's "Ekkehard" (1855) which the universal voice has already raised to the rank of a classic.<sup>2</sup> Here thorough study joins with genial fancy and hearty humor to present a charming picture of courtly and monastic life in mediæval Germany. Many of its characters and scenes are part and parcel of the popular literary consciousness and familiar to those who have never read the rather bulky volume. It is a story of the tenth century and the hero is a monk of St. Gall, teacher of duchess Hedwig of Swabia, who discovers too late their mutual love, when his obtuseness has roused her wrath and caused his exile. Without any pretense of learning, Scheffel has drawn a wonderfully fresh and bright picture of the period when German society was crystalizing, and the simplicity of the style well suits an age when the world was young. The humor has a childlike gaiety very different from the sarcasm and irony that tinges the later humorists of the century. This was Scheffel's only important novel, but he was author also of the famous story in verse of the "Trumpeter of Säkkingen," once student of law, then wandering musician, and at last papal band-master; a story told with more verve and bubbling humor than was common in Germany then or is now.

In Scheffel the German spirit was deep and strong. Professor Ebers brings us to the sphere of purely antiquarian interests. His novels have so little of the distinctively Germanic that they are almost as widely read in America as at home. Most of them have Old Egypt for their scene and their attraction lies in the curiosity that this new-old world naturally excites even in the half-cultured. His style

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<sup>1</sup> For instance *Isegrimm* and *Ruhe ist die Erste Pflicht*.

<sup>2</sup> Its sale (110,000) far exceeds that of any other German novel.

is charming, his plots well managed, but he fails in the development of characters which after all in their thoughts and motives are thoroughly modern. So, as Franz Hirsch has observed, if one were to transfer these novels from Egypt to modern times and give these "four o'clock tea" Egyptians modern costumes, one would soon see how dry, unreal, weak, and poor, how artificial in sentiment, how lacking in all poetic freshness this so called poetry is in its nature. In Ebers there is learning, as we might expect from a German professor. Learning builds for him an antique stage perfect in every detail, but here his imagination fails and modern actors tread the ancient boards.<sup>1</sup> Much the same may be said of the classical novels of Eckstein, whose titles, *Aphrodite*, *Nero*, *Prusias*, *Die Claudier*, sufficiently indicate their subjects.

A much higher place in this field must be accorded to Felix Dahn, who gives himself also a more sympathetic task, for he takes the German migration as his theme and so strikes a chord that is sure to stir the German heart. His *Kampf um Rom* has a breadth and a swing that makes it kin to the old popular epic and gives it a very high artistic unity. Indeed this is one of the greatest historical novels of any country. The writer has chosen a generous canvas. But though the tale fills four volumes, the interest never flags. Rather one feels a growing regret as one sees fatally impending the tragic close of the story and of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths. We watch Germanic virtues softened by the culture of the South and falling at last a prey to its devious and unscrupulous diplomacy.

In these dark ages when history is obscure, a freer scope may be claimed for the fancy of the novelist. Certainly Dahn has given his characters a wonderful reality. No German but feels that they are of his race, and his pulses beat quicker in sympathy with a people whose democratic virtues were the causes of their fall. The mass of learning

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<sup>1</sup> Vischer, in his novel *Auch Einer* has inserted a delightful parody of this antiquarian fiction.



that this book involves is immense, but it is carried so lightly that only the specialist realizes with what care each detail of art, language, mythology, and antiquity, is wrought into a perfect picture of the times. The Gothic princes, Theodoric, Totila, Wiligis, and Tela, are strongly drawn, while, in her fearful vengeance, Amalaswintha rises to the height of an ancient epic heroine. Cethegus, the old Roman, prefect, republican, despot, and demon, is, like Narses and Belisarius, rather a personification than a character, but the Emperor Justinian and his wife, the quondam circus-dancer Theodora, are clearly conceived and sharply characterized. This is by far the greatest work of Dahn, but his shorter stories of the migration, though in lighter vein, have value both as side-lights to history and as poetic creations. The invasion of the Huns becomes more real by his "Attila." "Bissula" and "Felicitas" vivify and clarify our ideas of the relation of German and Roman culture along the Rhine as the empire was nodding to its fall. Not even Thierry had made the Merovingians so real as Dahn's "Fredegonde", that queen who lives still in French song as "the fair, the blonde, the terrible."

The only compeer of Dahn in national fiction is Freytag, who had already made a name for himself in the drama and in the romance of modern life, and had approved himself in his "Pictures from the German Past" a deep student of antiquity and a master of composition. He was past middle life, already fifty-six, when he undertook in a series of seven novels to erect a monument to the continuity of German character through all ages of its history. Eight years of his maturest talent were devoted to the work which is already a classic in German literature. *Die Ahnen* "The Ancestors" are wider in scope, more national in character though perhaps less vivid in execution, than the work of Dahn. First "Ingo" reaches back with epic simplicity into the twilight of German history, then "Ingraban" brings us to the christian conversion and to our own S. Boniface. Here, too, the epic style rises to rhythm and frequently to alliteration, so that form

aids language in conjuring these ancient scenes which reach at times a tragic grandeur that recalls the fate of the Nibelungen. A third shows the Roman Church beginning to predominate in German culture, another tells of the Teutonic Knights and their struggle with Prussian heathendom. In "Marcus König" we come to the Reformation and the founding of the Prussian state. The concluding parts deal with the Thirty Years War, the development of Prussia under Frederick William I. and the revival of national life after the humiliations of Napoleon. All is infused with a genuine patriotic spirit that knows no other limits than the German race. Few novelists have had so wide and lofty a conception of their vocation as Freytag and Dahn. Contemporary literature shows nothing like it. Nor is the reason hard to see. No other nation of Europe in the last half century has had its national pride so stirred, and its national consciousness so exalted, as Germany since 1866. In literature as in history, the hour brings the man.

In the second division of fiction, the study of modern life, if we go back to the reaction that followed the nipping of the aspirations of "Young Germany" in 1849, we shall find the writers still liberal in politics, and bent, though with greater moderation, on social and moral propaganda. Under these conditions imaginative work of the first order was not likely to be produced, and it is probably correct to say that the first novel since 1850 that is still read by any but students of literature, is Freytag's *Soll und Haben*. This, too, is political in tendency, but it has raised the question to a higher plane and struck the key-note of the fiction of this generation. This key-note is the inevitable conflict between the industrial, democratic spirit of the age and the spirit of caste and privilege rooted in the feudal past and little shaken in Germany even by the French Revolution. An inevitable conflict, with right and wrong on both sides, but with forces apparently so unequal that it might well seem necessary, in the words of Freytag's preface, "to rouse the people from their discouragement and show them a picture of their own

worthiness." So here, as later in *Die Ahnen*, he was inspired with a wise patriotism and able to aid effectively in the moral development of his nation. He preaches the gospel of honest industry. The great commercial house of Schröter, with its patriarchal government, with industry and honesty infusing energy in every part, "where work is pleasure," was something new in German fiction. The aristocracy, in its virtues and its weakness, is shown to be the nidus of the commercial Jews who prey upon it, and the moral is that the nobility can maintain itself only by adopting, with its representative Fink, the virtues of the industrial class. But though it was once a gospel of democracy, to-day the book seems to belong to the past. The industrialism that it preached is an accomplished fact, and while it is still interesting, the novel has not the actuality that once made it a power.

For *Soll und Haben* was the beginning of a new epoch in fiction. Not as though the romantic school had ceased to have its representatives which still paraded mock pathos to the half-cultured. Keller and his *Grüner Heinrich* found no lack of popularity for their mystical maunderings, and Schönbach does not scruple to call this writer the greatest German poet of the second half of the century. But in the main the growing sternness brushed these survivals aside. For in the sixties it grew clear that the reckoning day was not far off, the political tension became more intense and was immediately reflected in fiction, especially by Spielhagen's *Problematische Naturen* and *Durch Nacht zum Licht*, 1861-2.

Here, as in his earlier ventures, Spielhagen showed himself a close student of Goethe. The very title is from the "Elective Affinities." The subject is the same irrepressible conflict between the stolid landed nobility and the misguided intelligence of the nation, culminating in the catastrophe of 1849. These stories show how fiction during the sixties begins to get more in touch with popular feeling, following it step by step in its aspirations and its hopes; for Spielhagen has always a cheerful confidence in the future, not shared

by his contemporaries, Meissner and Hopfen. The aim of his novels, like that of the people for whom they were written, was, however, not always clear or decided. It is curious to note how in this decade Auerbach's *Auf der Höhe* and *Das Landhaus am Rhein*, in contrast to *Barfüßle* and the harmless Village Tales of his earlier manner, illustrate this same tendency in their attempted solution of social problems by the acid of Spinoza's philosophy. It is graceful, but a winter's chill runs through it all.

But soon the progress of politics gave a new impulse to German energies. War with Denmark was followed close by the great victory over Austria of 1866 and the dazzling triumphs of 1870. The German empire was once more a reality, not the simulacrum that Napoleon had laid forever to rest in 1806, but such as it was in Barbarossa's day, a great, perhaps the greatest power in Europe.

The effect on the historical novel of this crisis of the world was transforming; on the novel of modern life it was less apparent, for the empire while it lifted the political cloud did not solve the social problems, which rather became the more acute as thought was more concentrated on them. Pessimism, the prevailing philosophy of the sixties, continues still to color the treatment of modern life. In Germany, as in France, the tendency is to lay bare life's seamy side, to deal with the diseased, the deformed, the exceptional. This tends to bring into the foreground a new factor, the religious, beside the political and the social. In Germany and in England, the religious novel, or at least religion in the novel, begins to find a place, and, there, as here, the attitude is, as it was in the political and social field, "liberal," that is opposed to traditional christianity. The leaders of thought in this field are Schopenhauer and Strauss; the head of the new school of fiction is Paul Heyse, distinguished also as a critic, poet, and dramatist.

The first great novel of Heyse dates from 1873. "Children of the World" is its significant title, its contents pessimistic philosophy applied to every sphere of social life ex-

cept the political. The divorce of religion and morality is its moral, the overthrow of the church establishment in Prussia its immediate purpose. This may not promise much to the American and, I trust, christian reader, but yet the book, in spite of what Bleibtreu calls its "sensuous sentimentality and sentimental sensuousness", where the author "in a dress coat promenades gracefully with sin",<sup>1</sup> in spite of all its alleged "creeping poison," is of great talent and intense interest, a work that would disown "Robert Elsmere" even for a weak and erring brother. Less powerful, but more delightful, than this novel is "Im Paradiese," a story of artist life in Munich. Its fundamental theory is much the same however. Marriage is the theme, the thesis that freedom is permissible to the aristocracy of genius. The hero's unhappiness comes from his marriage, the cure from an artistic attachment; and that divorce and a second marriage restore all to the legal basis is, as Heyse expressly tells us, only a concession to formality. Of such "concessions" the whole book is full. The bulwarks of bourgeois morality are never directly attacked, but they are silently undermined in each of the four artist marriages that close the story. One cannot leave it, however, without bearing witness to the fresh beauty of its style and the graceful lightness of its movement, things rather rare in this school of fiction. But Heyse is perhaps best known by his short stories, which hold much the same place in Germany that Maupassant's do in France, models in their kind, approached only by Storm and Keller, masterpieces of form, cameos cut with a firm hand, leaving an impression on the mind where every line tells.

Less artistic, more rigidly modern, more closely affiliated to the French "naturalists," is Paul Lindau, who with Mautzner and Ring makes a specialty of dissecting low Berlin life, while Fontaine and Heiberg show a more sympathetic study of the local types of the German capital. These suggest Dickens's London sketches, but the former are discouraging pictures and not pleasant reading. Take for instance

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<sup>1</sup> Bleibtreu: *Revol. in der Litt.*, p. 25.

Lindau's "Arme Mädchen," where the poor but honest girl struggles to preserve her repute and purity amid surroundings that drag her down, hindered by poverty from the marriage of her choice, and cutting at last the knot of her existence by suicide, quite in the old Werther fashion, while a girl of the middle class, her unacknowledged half-sister, who is far from sharing her virtue or virtues, steals her lover because she can offer him social equality, in exchange for which all merits weigh lightly even in the mind of her highly respectable mother-in-law, who is indeed a sort of conspirator in her son's deception. Lindau is a Jew and he may take a grim pleasure in exclaiming with Shylock, "These be your christian husbands." Again in his *Spitzen*, the cardinal question is if any circumstances would justify a man in betraying the honor a woman had confided to him. But the public are not casuists, nor is the novel a suitable place for ethical discussion. Were Berlin society as Lindau paints it, it would hardly hold together over night.

The same discouraged pessimism has possessed in recent years the work of Jensen, whose earlier stories, for instance the *Braune Erica*, had shown a mastery of the prose idyl in descriptions of North German country scenes. Now the capital attracts him, and his annual novel grows gloomier every year in its treatment of the upper classes of society. Take, for instance, *In der Fremde*. The pastor's daughter marries the young officer. Her betrothed theological student is left in the lurch. By and by, when she has discovered that passion, not sympathy drew them together, she meets her old love, now a university tutor in philosophy. The name of this friend of wisdom is Lorenz. It might as well have been Abelard, since hers is Heloise. She hears him lecture on the fascinating topic, "The highest love is life's highest law." Nobody understands, but everybody is delighted, and Heloise is "emancipated."

Here, too, there seems a sort of grudge in the author's mind against the basis of our social order. Not indeed, as in the forties, an open attack on marriage as such, but an un-

dermining of its outposts, and indirectly a plea for free divorce. A group of French reformers gave the key-note. No German has caught their tone more completely than Ernst Eckstein. Let us consider *Jorinde*. The scene is St. Remo, whither My Lady Jorinde, has taken her poor heart to be cured of its hopeless love for the brilliant officer, Baron Prittwitz, who happens to be betrothed to another. Dr. Max cures My Lady's consumption and offers her heart and hand, which are gratefully accepted. The young couple meet the officer. He has broken his engagement meantime. The old love claims its right in the young wife's heart. Dr. Max discovers the state of the case. On whom shall he take vengeance? On nobody, says German law. On the gentleman, say the ever gallant French. On the lady, says Eckstein, who tells us how Dr. Max nurses back into activity the dormant seeds of his wife's consumption, and boasts of his success over her grave to the desolate Prittwitz. They have a duel, the Doctor is killed, Prittwitz becomes insane, the author sells several editions, and is reckoned among the first writers of his school. We shall meet this versatile man next among the—humorists.

These are but few from the legion of social novels, but they are typical of the class and sufficient for our purpose. These men write as reformers, they deal, *ex professo*, with the exceptional and the diseased, but their work lacks both the literary and moral qualities that could give it permanent value. Probably first in historic fiction, in this field the Germans must take the second, perhaps the third, place among the nations of Europe.

Closely allied to these social studies are the novels that deal with recent politics with as much sensational liberty as the police censorship will allow. The best in this poor kind is Gregor Samarow (Georg von Meding) who spins on such tragedies as the suicide of Louis II. of Bavaria tales that appeal strongly to the middle classes, but do not exist for any other. Somewhat higher in aim are stories written, so far as can be seen, solely for healthy amusement. Marlitt, with easy

fecundity, has raised suspense to a science. Through the widely circulated *Gartenlaube* she exercised for many years a predominating influence on German women of the middle class, and through many translations on American women also. Those whose literary memory dates back a decade or two will recall "Old Mamzell's Secret," "Goldelse," and the "Little Moorland Princess," all painfully alike, all consulting neither natural nor psychological probability, all fostering a mild liberalism, religious and social, that accorded with, and doubtless promoted, the tendency of the time. With Marlitt may be grouped two Austrian ladies, Madam Ebner-Eschenbach, a high-minded noblewoman, who knows above all things how to tell a good story and enjoys the telling of it, and Ossip Schubin, whose gospel of peace, *Die Waffen Nieder*, recently achieved a sensational success, less perhaps for its merits than for its doctrine.

A more careful student of life than these ladies, and appealing to a rather more cultured class than Marlitt, is Spielhagen, who, since 1870, has turned his attention from "reform" to the purveying of popular sensation, subordinating his preaching more and more to the demands of publisher and bookseller. *Sturmflut* (1877) shows, indeed, a higher tone. The great storm on the Baltic furnishes the background for a vivid picture of the speculative craze with which the French milliards infected Germany, and the fearful crash that followed. There is something epic in the rush of water here and of panic there, each a whirlpool of ruin. The ball on the eve of the crisis, dancing on a volcano, is the best single chapter in Spielhagen's work and suggests Thackeray's Brussels before Waterloo. In later years Spielhagen's prolific pen takes more and more the easy tone that suits the mental dyspepsia of his readers. *Quisisana* (1880) "roars you as gently as any sucking dove," *Die Schönen Amerikanerinnen* is a commonplace story of a commonplace swindler, and his interesting daughters, and *Hans and Grete* belongs to the naïve peasant tales, of which more presently. In general Spielhagen's sympathies are democratic still,



probably because most of his readers share them. To this he occasionally sacrifices proportion and caricatures his noblemen. He is weakest in the development of character, most witty in his dialogue, and strongest in action and plot.

Spielhagen and Marlitt may represent the entertaining social novel. Another group depends on the exotic for attraction. Franzos is wont to carry us to Galicia, Poland, or the plains of eastern Russia, which his imagination peoples with weird and wild creations. Lindau lays the scene of several novels in America, Jokai's Hungarian tales are familiar to American readers through cheap translations, and the rich imagination of Sacher-Masoch has run wild riot in unsavory tales of Russia, Galicia, and Vienna, whose pessimism is but a thinly disguised cultus of Venus Vulgiva. Then, there is a whole group of men who follow Auerbach with the unequal steps of little Iulus, and give us Village Stories or, as the fashion now sets, Swiss and Tyrolean tales and Bavarian highland scenes. Doubtless there is a public for these sentimental milkmaids and sighing shepherds, for the pessimistic jodlers and alpine disciples of Schopenhauer. Anzengruber, Rosegger, and Schmid have readers, probably more than they would have in any other country, but they are only an eddy in the current.<sup>1</sup> Still, at present, the number of these exotic and pastoral romances is great, much greater than their excellence. Such abundance is striking, for in France this genus was rare till Loti began to write, and the German development seems independent of England which might have furnished helpful models.

It is a parlous thing to speak of foreign humor, and I forego any effort to analyse the art by which Wilhelm Raabe, in spite of his pessimistic resignation, manages to win a smile even from the seamy side of life. He lays his stories in out of the way villages, takes for his characters as

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<sup>1</sup> Schönbach on the other hand thinks Anzengruber "of the highest merit," his drama, *Das Vierte Gebot* immortal, and the story, *Sternsteinkopf*, hardly inferior to the former.

out of the way people as Dickens, and treats them with as delightful minuteness, though his earlier stories, *Der Heilige Born* (1861) and *Die Horacker* (1872) have a fresher spirit than the later, which is strange when we consider the general course of German literature before and since the seventies. More boisterous than Raabe is Eckstein, who has made a specialty of studies of the comic side of school life, for whose bubbling humor one is disposed to thank him more than for his social or classical novels.

Perhaps the most remarkable living German humorist is Stinde. It is difficult to speak with moderation of his photographic accuracy in the affectionate study of middle class Berlin life. We look no longer through the red glasses of Lindau, but see everyday life as we hope it is in many thousand homes in the city by the Spree. An account of the trip of the "Buchholz Family" to Italy opened the series. Then Frau Buchholz began to write letters to one of the Berlin papers whose readers were gradually roused to see that a literary masterpiece was appearing where one is not wont to look for such, even in Germany. The letters were soon collected in a volume and had a success hardly paralleled in a country where 10,000 counts as 100,000 in France. The Buchholz Family approached the larger figure, and a second part added to the author's success in this unique field, which a final volume could not more than maintain. These books have been done into English, though it is surprising that any one with wit enough to dare to attempt it, should not have had wit enough to let it alone. It is as if one should translate the "Biglow Papers" into French. He who has not learned Berlinese from the lips of one of themselves, will hardly ever come to appreciate the racy flavor of Frau Buchholz's language. It is no such German as we ever saw in print before, but every line recalls to the initiated reader some memory of old student days. This was the way his landlady or his washerwoman used to talk. The same dry humor, the same skeptical half-culture, the same keen worldly wisdom, the same colossal belief in Berlin. And the humor is so fresh,

so genial, so healthy, so different from that melancholy that pervades the books we have been considering since we left Freytag and his fellows. But of course, after all, it is only the play of genius.

If we turn to other fields of imaginative literature during this period we shall find less originality but a like spirit. In drama, except for the realists, Wildenbruch and Sudermann, to whom we shall recur, translations or adaptations from the French predominate. Among native writers of comedy the best, Blumenthal, Lindau, L'Arronge, are not remarkable, and all their humor has a touch of bitter irony. Genuine epic poetry we should hardly look for in these days, and the few attempts, such as Scherenberg's, are obvious failures. Light narrative verse, since Scheffel's *Trompeter*, has not risen above the dignity of books for the parlor table, while lyric poetry has lost much of the freedom of form that made the charm of Heine, and, so far as it is not iconoclastic, is rather dreary. Criticism, too, is in a sad state, often venal, and far from those broad views that made the work of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller in this field truly constructive and helpful.

This is the excuse for being of a rebellious school whose character has been just hinted in the word "iconoclastic," a group that sometimes calls itself "Young Germany," with a reminiscence of 1848, and sometimes the realist school, though it should not be confounded with the like-named French realists. It has more and manifold points of contact with that Parisian coterie which rejoices in the name of the Decadents. At the head of this movement is Bleibtreu, more important as a critic than as an original writer, though it enrages him to be told so. Their organs have been the *Magazin für die Litteratur des In- und Auslandes* and *Die Gesellschaft*. It is a rather numerous body of zealous young writers, born for the most part in the twenty years preceding the French war, who in striking out new paths begin with a wholesale condemnation of the old, especially of the "weak lemonade" and "sugar-water erotics," as Bleibtreu

happily designates the lyrics of Scheffel, Geibel, and their like. These younger poets mean to be strong, they often end in being coarse. It is the untutored zeal of the Storm and Stress period over again. Would that a second classical period might follow it, but of that there is at this day no sign.

This school, like the other discontented youth of Germany, is deeply tinged with socialism, so deeply that some of their work is published in Switzerland to avoid the censorship. It is also for the most part violently and rather incoherently blasphemous, according to christian standards, which, if it signify anything, must mean that christianity is still Germany's strongest bulwark against socialism. Holz proclaims himself with characteristic modesty "the Nazarite, the inborn son of deity." Gradnauer says: "I am chosen like Moses and Christ, I come to deliver." So after all it seems these men recognize the deity against whom, like fallen spirits, they rebel. With this attitude to religion they will naturally be iconoclasts in other fields.

Most characteristic of these writers is their thorough belief in themselves. Bleibtreu makes bold to declare: "I neither see now, nor shall I ever see, any reason to change my opinions." This is in his preface to the "Literary Revolution." Again in the *Kampf ums Dasein der Literatur* we learn that realism "has three stages which best show themselves in their chief representatives, the lyric in Liliencron, the fresh natural full-blooded painter of feeling, the epic in Kretzer, the socialistic novelist, the dramatic in its widest sense, embracing the lyric, epic, and psychologic-philosophic, in—myself." Further on he says that his novel, *Dies Irae*, "will hardly ever be surpassed in its symbolic significance, and fulfils completely all the artistic laws of the newly created genre." And yet in spite of this rodomontade Bleibtreu is a genius.

He and his fellows run amuck at the current literature because it is conventional and addressed in the main to the ladies of society whose minds he thinks by nature emascu-

late. The new literature must gird itself to deal with antagonisms of race and great questions of social order. Its realism is to be Shakspeare's, not Zola's. Critics not of his shibboleth he treats with a contempt so fierce as to be almost laughable, and yet there is a vigor and brilliancy in Bleibtreu's pamphlets that we hardly find paralleled to-day in Germany.

Not content with revolutionizing lyric poetry, this school has laid violent hands on the novel. In historic fiction Bleibtreu has made the wars of the two Napoleons his peculiar field. *Dies Irae*, "a realistic epic of the world's history" deals with the French war, and in its graphic picture of Sedan affords interesting material for comparison with Zola's "Débâcle." The same versatile writer has given us a Nibelungen story of which he allows that "the technique is incomplete," and has attempted the exotic in "Norway Tales." He has also done striking work in historic literary criticism.

Far less extravagant than Bleibtreu, though essentially of his school, is Wildenbruch, who in his dramas has tried to do for the national spirit what Dahn and Freytag have done in their novels. *Die Quitzows* and *Die Karolinger* are remarkable literary expressions of the personified Prussian spirit. In short stories, too, Wildenbruch shows great originality in tragic development.<sup>1</sup> Another dramatist of as great power and perhaps greater promise is Sudermann, whose *Ehre* and *Sodom's Ende* achieved sensational success, while his best novels, for instance, *Katzensteg*, *Frau Sorge*, and *Iolanthe's Hochzeit* are hardly less admirable in technique and power, coupled in the last case with original humor of a high order. Sudermann is certainly the most promising of the new realists.

The most thorough-going writers of fiction in the new school are Hauptmann, who is the most brutal of the group but not without power, and Kretzer, "another whom Zola has

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<sup>1</sup> For instance *Die Astronomen*, *Vor den Schranken*, *Franceska von Rimini*.

quite spoiled," as a sad critic tells us, a man of remarkable strength in portraying the fierce instincts of the proletariat, and a pessimist with much bitterness of indignation at what seem to him social wrongs. "Such strength of soul-painting, such depth of characterization, such power of passion, such reckless energy and dauntlessness in the poetic grasp of the most fearful sufferings and sins, such a Shaksperian tragic sweep, has never yet been seen in German literature," says Bleibtreu<sup>1</sup> and there is truth mingled with the obvious exaggeration. The titles of his books are significant, "The Deceived," "The Ruined," (*Die Verkommenen*), "The Socialist Tornado," "Three Women," this last perhaps the best of all unless we prefer *Meister Timpe*. But it is foolish to presume to measure Kretzer with Zola. He shares with the great Frenchman a certain carelessness in rhetoric, he makes new words and misuses old ones, as does Zola. *Germinal* and *Die Verkommenen* offer the nearest subjects of comparison, but Kretzer never attains Zola's wide sweep and epic grandeur.

In general we may say of German literature since the French war that apart from science and history, with its handmaid fiction, work has not yet been produced in any field that might lead us to see in it either the fulfilment or the promise of a classical period. In some departments it has fallen again under French influence, in none does it testify to a healthy development of the nation's æsthetic taste or social and moral life.

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<sup>1</sup> *Revolution in der Literatur*, p. 37.